

Chan 14 Feb 68

Big mistake for US since 1963

NLF doesn't hide Hanoi link from its cadres — to borrow prestige of Ho; ~~though~~ they stress independence from Hanoi mainly for benefit of intellectuals and Westerners. Only very sophisticated ones can see Ho as counter-revolutionary; most see him as hero, source of pride.

After D

Ng. Ngoc Binh could have been leader; Tam (Min. of For. Affairs under Ho; suicide in '65).

Dim did seem up comparable to Ho (though less); but after...

"If you have a ^{dictator} monarchy system — like Ho, Dim — you must look closely at the leader. If leader seems average, mediocre, the people demand right to disagree, talk back: Thim, Ky....

Dictator must have be respected — honorable life, patriot, etc. If so, people have little desire to argue, criticize.

Dim Thim — majority regard as average person — they want to argue, criticize. If they are not allowed, the result is apathy.

Thus, to make dictatorship work, need good leader image:

- a) revolutionary, nationalistic past
- b) example of respectable private life, honorable.

or, c) democratic, "friendly" accessible leader.

Since 1964, we couldn't offer (A) rings (Ho, Dim) ; yet
people around Ky (etc.) did not let him conform to democratic
model — he accessible ; he tried to behave like an (A) leader,
without qualifications.

Cham:

In 1964, VC increased both coercion and persuasion.

They never could induct men who ~~is~~ converted before being inducted; they are on induct. after induction — there is more of this than before.

[This never commented on, by Goun, Rostow, etc.]

[Trends in induct?]

VC ends up knowing why he is fighting; ARVN / RO cadre etc. prefers to fight on GVN side than VC (pay, power, etc.) but has no sense of cause, purpose.

(just "anti-Communism" — "If you put in 2 mil troops, everyone will be very anti-Com — so long as you are here.")

Views of US: "Most intellectuals — profs, offrs, etc. — believe US has detailed, long-range, comprehensive plan for VN: everything that has been happening (catastrophes, etc.) is the unfolding of this plan. They think Cham is too idealistic, distorted — credits US with too good intentions. Cham does believe in US good intentions: interprets events (since 1964) in terms of US incompetence, incoherence, ignorance, stupidity, lack of concept or plan; they over-rate US on this score.

LEmington 53300 Sol Leach, Laid Berry

[Struggle — Jct, assass,

LE 5,3300

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Issues:

- US choices in 1957-58 Dien
training, org
- Mil. training of ARVN
- Situation in 1960-61
- US choices in 1961: troops
influence
Dien
politics - How significant were reforms we asked?

- 1963

Bio

Program for: VN; C. bloc; US; elsewhere

Negate

On

On spec, street lights:

Although Dim did not fit democratic model C, now wants, C. thinks street lights would have worked eventually: i.e. that faults in program would have been modified and corrected, eventually: 3-5 years. And would have beaten Coms.

Budds could have been improved (less violently than in '66)
Thus could have been made to leave.

"If W could have backed principle...

[i.e. C. seems to say: authoritarian system can work with a Ho or a Dim; but without such a leader, must have fair system. BUT: was even Dim good enough? System won't work.]

US should have pressed Diem to let oppositionists into Cabinet;
would have reduced power of Nhu clique:

- a) if ignored, would have resigned,
- b) could not fake elections

("Many different ways to support a leader; doesn't just mean, 'Go ahead, I'll follow you.'")

On mil. preparation:

Maj. Butterfield worked with Cham in Dalat on 4-year cadet course. Cham thought mistake to emphasize conventional org + tactics. Gen. Don, US, decided on this route; had no guerrilla experience. Didn't foresee insurgency; didn't really believe in invasion either, but saw no alternative.

At those days, Americans were unfamiliar, generous; were impressed by promise of resources to develop ARVN (150-1 p's for academy);
c) tried to be friendly with Americans.

US troops: Except for Geneva, most VN off's wanted US bases on coast, DMZ, to deter

hanging really began late '59 (before that, B.X., H.H., C.O.)
(Before Com needed time to prepare people psychologically).

C. Thought US troops needed in late-63, early-64; ^{never thought it} not before.
esp. after Diem corp. In retrospect, would have preferred
more RVNAF to US.

C: US did not know how to influence Diem. Neither Dulles nor
Rothig had any influence, because neither had Washington support;
(In 59-60, Diem wanted to strengthen RF/PF; rejected by Dulles? Willson?)

Dulles might not have succeeded even with Wash support;
Diem too proud, sentimental

US strong stand on Budd crisis was correct, but should have
kept Rothig to handle it — no pagoda raid if Rothig had
stayed; if Lodge had not been sent to take with advance
publicity as "Governor-General."

In 1959-61 US should have:

1) increased RF/PF instead of ARVN. (Diem?)

(Diem pushed ARVN

It would have been good to replace Diem (with Surin)
in 1959-60 (1961 borderline); popular support; VC would not
have gotten so strong. Good for US to support Nov 60 coup: C (in Malaysia)

But by 1962-63, too late to displace with Diem.
could not afford to depose Diem:

hoped & expected.

c) VC too strong.

d) Street hamlet program would have worked, even with
Dien, and wouldn't have worked, by '63

Collapse in countryside in 1963 due to collapse in village
admin after coup. PC's, DC's, village chiefs (& ARVN) all shifted
(usually to other posts —

— [By 1957, essential to replace Dien — to contain VC
without US; By 1963, needed US, with or without Dien;
but by 1961-63, "too late" to get rid of Dien — at least,
unless could (a) keep village chiefs in place, (b) move to democracy.

(Yet after Pagoda raid, Dien was finished. (No raid
if Nolting hadn't left.) Even then, Nolting (not Lodge) backed by
US could have gotten Nhu out, contained Buddhists. Street hamlets
would have worked eventually — though not C's ideas — because
DC/PC's views were considered, unlike later.

No alternative to democracy (since 1963; 1958?), given Com competition,
lack of leadership. US ignorance = inability to take over, pick
leaders.

Who went where

City vs. countryside: Dien lost cities ^{support} after 1961-63, but could have
gotten countryside; after coup, got some city support — not action — but lost
countryside.

A

1961

Margolis on my paper:

[Crisis was coming eventually; failure of policy was ~~from~~ going to force JFK to reconsider troop decision, aside from Laos. And there was a deterioration caused by VC, (though this wasn't clear till Taylor visit) — though not enough to be used, in itself, as arg. for US troops. Laos did, in part, motivate VNear + Diem desires for US troops; and it seemed as essential to force JFK's hand: a) by Diem, who wanted commitment in face of non-Comm pressures, and b) by JCS/HcN, who ~~would~~ thought troops needed eventually (and who believed in committing Pres, after Laos, Bay of Pigs, etc.)

But at least as important as Laos was consideration of Laos, etc. (Laos was not main consideration for JCS; ^(see above) perhaps even for Diem)

Tactics failed to get troops out of VFK.

Question: Would JFK have done even less in fall '61, except for Laos, Laos ^{Diem, JCS} (Pigs, Berlin, etc.). No advisors; tougher line on reform; Laos-type attitude?

— Why did JCS press for troops in SVN? Symbolic, confidence in VN; or, commit Pres; or, needed now; or needed later?

[^{Fill.} 1961 — when JFK decided not to send US troops to VN.

Yet did strengthen the commitment: without reform.

(Breaking their Geneva limitation)

— Was VC step-up a factor in "decision point" — or lowered confidence because of Laos?

U

Dim
Ethan thought Coms could succeed by manipulating
ignorant non-Com groups — have toughness with internal groups.
(Thought US Ambass. didn't appreciate.)

US-VNese Difficult for sincere VNese to accept the capture of
the US representative, at any level — compared to VNese. US much more
influential if US guidance corresponded to position taken by VNese,
even strong opponents: more confidence & judgment. Moral: good
opportunity to work with NAs, in dealing with GVN; otherwise, will regard
ideas as "purely American," — ignorant, or US-imitation. "Complex of
resisting American ideas" also for fear of being accused of being under
US influence.")

Dim. Dictatorship system could work under Diem
(better than successors), well enough for development, etc.
But could not compete with Ho Chi Minh, Comm dictatorship;
stronger ^{dictatorship} will win. [Ho better image; better organized; better
disciplined; supported by strong allies, where Diem's dictatorship
could not be accepted by US, West.]

Only a democratic approach could work in combatting
Ho's system (though elsewhere, strong enough leader & system might
succeed vs. Com.)

Diem did need to destroy armed strength of sects; but afterwards,
should have helped them regain confidence and dignity, participate.

(If he had let sects remain armed — something like Chao Do, An Binh, I Corps today — this would have worked us. VC

